SCIENCE & GOVERNMENT REPORT

The Independent Bulletin of Science Policy

Vol. VII, No. 5 | P.O. Box 6226A, Washington, D.C. 20015 | March 15, 1977

DNA Rules Force Dumping of Research Project

In what is believed to be the first major action to enforce federal safety guidelines governing recombinant DNA research, a University of California geneticist has been forced to destroy the best part of two years' work because his experiments were performed under conditions proscribed by the final version of the guidelines.

The incident is complicated by the fact that the research was carried out during a period when the safety guidelines were being developed and the ground rules were changing. Early versions of the guidelines didn't rule out the experiments, and even the final version is a bit ambiguous in one key area. Nevertheless, the incident provides an interesting example of the way the guidelines are working, though it raises a number of questions.

The work was carried out by John Carbon, a researcher at the University of California at Santa Barbara. It consisted, essentially, of slicing up the entire DNA contained in yeast cells with a special enzyme, and splicing the DNA fragments onto a circular ring of DNA known as a plasmid. Carbon then inserted the plasmids containing the "foreign" yeast genes into bacteria known as *E. Coli,* and grew large colonies of the bacteria containing copies (clones) of the transplanted yeast genes.

DoD Chief Decrees End To Military Medical School–Page 5

None of that would ordinarily be ruled out by the guidelines, but the problem was that Carbon used a strain of *E. Coli* which was capable of transferring plasmids from one bacterium to another (a so-called conjugative system). That property was, in fact, an essential feature of Carbon's experiments.

The danger in using such a system, however, is that the "foreign" genes may be transferred into bacteria capable of surviving easily in the environment. In other words, the system lowers the barrier against escape of recombinant DNA molecules from the laboratory.

Shortly after the final version of the guidelines was published last June by the National Institutes of Health, Carbon wrote to two members of the NIH Advisory Committee on Recombinant DNA (which played a key role in drafting the guidelines) to clarify whether his experiments would be outlawed by the guidelines.

The committee itself decided at a meeting in September last year that, although the guidelines were not explicit, they rule out the use of conjugative systems in recombinant DNA research. After some debate, the committee decided to recommend that Carbon should destroy the bacterial colonies into which he had transplanted the foreign genes. Carbon says he complied with the recommendation last fall.

During the past two years, Carbon had built up a bank containing some 50,000 clones of yeast genes, and he had also begun to build up a bank containing 10,000 clones of genes from the fruit fly *Drosophila.* Though he was able to extract some of the plasmids containing specific genes and transfer them to bacterial strains from which they would not be easily transmitted to other bacteria (non-conjugative systems), most of the clones were simply put into an autoclave and destroyed.

One irony in all of this is that Carbon had demonstrated that some of the transplanted yeast genes were functioning in the bacteria, a demonstration which has caused considerable interest because it opens up the possibility of studying what makes genes switch on and off. It also makes some of the potential dangers asso-

(Continued on Page 2)

In Brief

The directorship of Defense Research and Engineering, third highest civilian job in the Pentagon, is proving to be a difficult post to fill. At least half a dozen prospects have turned down the job. Most are from big industry, where the DoD salary of $52,500 is in the little-league class. Also scaring off the candidates is a still-pending DoD reorganization, which may downgrade the research post.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is now talking scared about the possibility of an armed assault on a nuclear power plant. Newly proposed security regulations call for safeguards that can stop "a determined violent external assault . . . by several persons . . . who could have the assistance of a knowledgeable insider and be armed with automatic weapons equipped with silencers; they also could have incapacitating agents and explosives to gain entry or otherwise destroy reactor integrity. . ."

HEW reports that "Although the excess supply of teachers is decreasing," there will be a shortfall of 70,000 jobs for teaching graduates this spring.

Coalition Forms to Block Recombinant Research

A group of scientists, environmentalists, and church leaders, calling themselves the Coalition for Responsible Genetic Research, has been formed to campaign for a worldwide moratorium on recombinant DNA experiments. Formation of the coalition was announced last week at a press conference a few hours before the start of a major meeting, sponsored by the National Academy of Sciences, to discuss the social implications of recombinant DNA research.

The coalition, which was put together by Friends of the Earth, consists mostly of people who have long been vocal in the campaign to ban or severely restrict recombinant DNA experiments. Prominent among its sponsors, for example, is George Wald, the Harvard Nobel prizewinner who played a leading role in the dispute over recombinant DNA research in Cambridge, Mass. But the list does, however, contain a few surprises, such as Sir MacFarlane Burnett, an eminent Australian immunologist and Nobel prizewinner, and Aurelio Peccei, founder of the Club of Rome.

A statement endorsed by the coalition argues that "genetic and molecular biological research is rapidly providing the basis for the practice of genetic engineering," and suggests that "the continuation of this research without public understanding and approval, and in fact without a full comprehension of its potential by most of the involved scientists, poses a worldwide danger which is intensified by the fact that industrial investment in the developing genetic technology has already begun."

The statement continues: "More immediately, current research itself involves serious hazards which inadvertantly could result in the spread of cancer or the creation of new diseases."

Consequently, the coalition calls for a moratorium on all experiments which could produce novel genetic combinations through splicing together genes from distantly related organisms.

Exactly how the coalition intends to seek such a moratorium isn't entirely clear from the statement, nor was it made explicit at the press conference. The most obvious approach is to seek to broaden the opposition to recombinant DNA research in local forums and to increase the decibel level of arguments against the research. A Friends of the Earth representative also noted that the group will lobby Congress to pass restrictive legislation.

If the goal is to increase the visibility of opposition to the research, then it was spectacularly achieved at the opening session of the Academy's meeting through the activities of an outfit called the Peoples' Business Commission, a reincarnation of the Peoples' Bicentennial Commission. In a scene reminiscent of the meetings of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) in the late 1960s and early 70s, a number of participants criticized the agenda, asked angry questions, made several interruptions, and challenged speakers to reveal their sources of support.

The Peoples' Business Commission had signalled its intention of disrupting the meeting by sending a tele-

(Continued on Page 3)

DNA *(Continued from Page 1)*

ciated with recombinant DNA research more plausible, however, since bacteria containing transplanted genes pose no hazards unless the transplanted genes are capable of functioning in some manner.

If Carbon had used a non-conjugative system to transplant yeast genes, his work would have been considered low risk under the NIH guidelines, because the yeast used in the experiments is not known to contain "harmful" genes.

Asked last week when he first had doubts about whether or not his work fell outside the NIH guidelines, Carbon said that "the realization dawned on me very slowly." He said that he began to wonder about the system last Spring, and was challenged on the matter at a recombinant DNA symposium held at MIT last June, shortly before the NIH guidelines were published. He wrote to the NIH advisory committee soon after the guidelines were published.

Carbon published the first results of his experiments in the February 1977 issue of the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences,* and accompanied the report with a statement pointing out that although his system "provides a valuable tool," he has discontinued its use because it is prohibited by the NIH guidelines.

Asked last week for his opinion of the matter, Carbon said, "We are willing to go along with the guidelines", but he added, "we are not happy about it".

A number of other researchers queried last week said that although the guidelines are indeed fuzzy on the use of conjugative systems, it has always been generally assumed that such systems would be proscribed since they lower the safety barrier in recombinant DNA research.

It took nearly two years for Carbon to realize that the research would probably fall outside the scope of the guidelines, but in the future, the level of consciousness of the scientific community will probably have been raised to such a point that inadvertant violations of the guidelines would be difficult to explain. —CN

Though Unannounced, Dr. Press is at Work

The Carter Administration has adopted a policy under which many are appointed but few are announced — which accounts for the fact that Frank Press has been on board for nearly a month as presidential science adviser, without official word of his hiring being issued (SGR Vol. VII, No. 4).

The reason for this exercise in non-public relations is wholly innocent: The clearance mill, through which all high-level appointees must pass, is heavily clogged with Carter recruits, and until the overwhelmed FBI can vouch for their purity, the Administration prefers to employ them without announcing them or sending their nominations to the Senate. In some instances, Congressional committees have balked at taking testimony from unconfirmed appointees, but in others it doesn't seem to matter. Press, for example, has testified before House and Senate committees on the $3.2-million appropriation request for the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), of which he is director.

Meanwhile, there's a White House staffing study now underway that will affect, among other things, the scope and scale of OSTP. Carter, like all new presidents, is determined to operate with a lean staff, and around the end of May expects to have a report completed on the organization of his personal staff and the Executive Office of the President, which now fills two office buildings

The study could bring major ups or downs for OSTP, which, under a current authorization from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), has 28 positions, of which 16 are professionals. However, since a number of other White House offices have accumulated science-policy slots, among them the National Security Council and OMB, one possible outcome is that these positions might be pruned in favor of letting the science office handle most science matters.

Unannounced and unconfirmed though he might be, Press is already in the mainstream of White House affairs. He attends the daily senior staff meeting and has been assigned some duties relating to the National Security Council. In addition, Hamilton Jordan, the President's top aide, has asked him to make recommendations for heading up the National Science Foundation and the space agency. Both are headed by holdovers from the Ford Administration — NSF on an acting basis by Richard Atkinson, and NASA by Administrator James Fletcher. Both, incidentally, are in the running to stay on.

COALITION *(Continued from Page 2)*

gram to Academy President Philip Handler, complaining that the meeting was supported by grants from pharmaceutical companies, and that the agenda failed to address the "social and moral issues of recombinant DNA research."

In an attempt to defuse the issue, David Hamburg, co-chairman of the meeting and President of the Institute of Medicine, invited Jermey Rifkin, the leading force in the Peoples' Business Commission, to outline his concerns.

While his supporters raised banners proclaiming their opposition to the research, Rifkin pointed out that six of the nine sponsors of the meeting were industrial corporations. He argued that the whole affair was aimed at creating favorable press coverage, and he told the scientists present that "you can't hide from the facts any more than the physicists who split the atom." He then asked how many scientists would be willing to push ahead with a line of research before all the consequences had been examined, and before the public had been completely informed. (Only two scientists responded affirmatively.)

An angry series of interchanges then ensued as Rifkin's supporters challenged speakers to reveal their sources of support. Most did so (including Erwin Chargraff, an outspoken critic of the research, who opined that "this is stupid," and added, "I have no industrial support, I am sorry to say.") — though a few refused. The meeting finally got under way, and by the following day's sessions the temperature had cooled a little.

© Science & Government Report, Inc., 1977

ISSN 0048-9581

Editor and Publisher
Daniel S. Greenberg

Contributing Editors
Colin Norman, Pamela Moore

European Correspondent
Michael Kenward (London)

Circulation Manager
Alice Anne Freund

Independently published by *Science & Government Report,* Inc., twice monthly, except once each in January, July and August. Annual Subscription: Institutions, $75 (two years, $140); individuals, $44 (two years, $75). Editorial offices at 3736 Kanawha St., N.W., Washington, DC 20015. Tel. (202) 244-4135. Second class postage paid at Washington, DC. Please address all subscription correspondence to Box 6226A, Northwest Station, Washington, DC 20015. Reproduction without permission is prohibited. SGR is available on Xerox University Microfilms.

Carter to Oust Ford-Picked Science Committee

The Carter Administration has decided to accept the pro forma resignations submitted just prior to inauguration day by the President's Committee on Science and Technology. The decision, which has not yet been conveyed to members of the Committee, was recommended by Frank Press, Carter's science adviser, and eliminates a Republican-appointed and dominated legacy that posed a dilemma for the new Administration (SGR Vol. VI, No. 21).

The Committee, created by the same legislation that set up the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), holds a two-year charter to make a virtually unrestricted study of US science and technology and to make recommendations for reorganizing the government's research and development agencies and programs. As such, it occupies a potentially powerful position in the reorganization-minded Carter era, but its Ford-appointed makeup is not altogether in harmony with the new Administration.

Heading the Committee as chairman and vice chairman, respectively, are Simon Ramo, a top executive and founder of TRW, Inc., and William O. Baker, president of Bell Labs, both long identified with the Republican Party. (In 1972, they co-chaired a scientists' committee for Nixon under the auspices of the notorious Committee for the Re-Election of the President). The two, furthermore, have lately been stumping for industry to fight against many of the consumer-oriented regulatory measures that Carter had supported during the campaign. The remaining original eight appointees to the Committee — drawn from academe, government, and industry — probably wouldn't draw a second glance for their political affiliations. But on the eve of departure, Ford added two appointees that grated on oldtime Democrats in Washington: Caspar Weinberger, who earned the enmity of Democrats during his budget-slashing days as Nixon's Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, and Paul O'Neil, a longtime OMB official who went out with the Ford Administration. O'Neil is at least well-regarded for his understanding of R&D affairs. But in any case, the last-minute appointments by a lameduck Administration were not well received.

Though the legislation that created the Committee specifies that the chairman and vice chairman serve at the pleasure of the President, it is silent on the matter of whether the membership for the two-year study can be changed in midstream. This raised the possibility that Carter would be stuck with all the Ford appointees, though he could either choose a chairman and vice chairman from among them, or select his own by making appointments that would bring the Committee up to its maximum membership of 14.

Apparently as a matter of courtesy, the members all submitted routine resignations on the eve of inauguration day, though Ramo at one point indicated a belief that the Committee membership was immune to the election returns. While awaiting a reply, Ramo twice convened the Committee, with the last meeting taking place on February 1-2. At that session, another meeting was scheduled for April 5-6, which suggests that Ramo and his colleagues had concluded that their tenure was assured.

Since political tinkering with supposedly pure scientific committees often risks the danger of adverse publicity, there was some likelihood that the Carter Administration would endure its Ford legacy and amend it through attrition and by filling the few remaining vacancies. But with the new Administration riding high in terms of public esteem, there is no need for it to worry about public reaction to the wipeout of what is, after all, a rather obscure advisory group. The acceptance of the resignations will go virtually unnoted by the public at large, as will the appointments to take their place.

Stevenson Gets Key R&D Post

Senator Adlai Stevenson (D-Ill.) has, as expected, been assigned the chairmanship of the key science subcommittee of the newly revamped Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation.

Called the Science and Space subcommittee, Stevenson's new unit will have broad oversight responsibility for federal science and technology policy, and it will have direct authority over most government science programs other than defense, energy, and biomedical research. The assignment thus puts Stevenson in a potentially key position in science policy affairs on Capitol Hill, an area in which he has little prior experience.

The subcommittee is now deep into authorization hearings on NASA's budget for fiscal year 1978, but one of its first major science policy tasks will be to conduct confirmation hearings for the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, when Carter officially sends the nomination to the Senate. Other members of the subcommittee are Wendell H. Ford (D-Ky.), Russell B. Long (D-La.), Ernest Hollings (D-S.C.), Ed Zorinsky (D-Neb.), Donald Reigle (D-Mich.), Harrison Schmitt (R-N.M.), Barry Goldwater, (R-Ariz.), and Robert Griffin (R-Mich.).

Military Medical School Gets Axed in 1st Year

Defense Secretary Brown has decided to do away with one of the more mindless extravagances on the Pentagon property list — the fledgling military medical school that was foisted on the government by F. Edward Hebert in the bygone days when he chaired the House Armed Services Committee (SGR Vol. V, No. 3).

The only losers are 32 first-year students, who face the difficult task of transferring elsewhere; 50 tenured faculty members, most of whom gave up senior posts to join the school, and the taxpayers, for whom the final cost of the aborted venture may run as high as $60 million.

Hebert, who retired last year after his colleagues dumped him from the chairmanship, had plugged creation of the school for 20 years, but found virtually no supporters until he succeeded to the chairmanship of the Armed Services Committee, in 1971. At that point, both Congress and the Nixon Administration suddenly detected great merit in the scheme, and shortly thereafter approval was given to an act establishing the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences — conveniently referred to as the military medical school. As envisioned in the legislation, the university would eventually include schools of dentistry, pharmacy, nursing, and veterinary medicine. But the initial stage was confined to the medical school, and the "university" never progressed beyond that step.

For starters, Congress appropriated $300,000 to renovate temporary facilities for the school at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, and it later came across with appropriations totaling $85 million for a permanent campus on the grounds of the National Naval Medical Center, in nearby Bethesda, Md. Meanwhile, some 1700 applications were received, and from these, 32 first-year students were selected to begin classes last September.

With all that money behind it and construction well underway, it looked as though the school would survive Hebert's ouster from the chairmanship and eventual retirement. Even diehard opponents expected that to be the case last year when Congress showed little interest in blocking further appropriations for the school.

But evidence on the economic illogic of the institution was accumulating, and with Hebert no longer in a position to prop up his creation — and no new champion on hand to take his place — political gravity began to take over. A study by the Defense Manpower Commission concluded that the school was a needless and excessively costly way to produce physicians for the armed services. And the General Accounting Office concluded that the cost of producing doctors in the school would amount to nearly $190,000 apiece, compared with $36,700 for acquiring physicians through scholarship programs in existing civilian schools.

Officials of the military medical school countered that these studies exaggerated the costs of their school and minimized the costs of civilian medical training, but the studies apparently hit home when Defense Secretary Brown was looking for economies in the budget that he inherited from the Ford Administration. On February 22, Brown announced his amendments to that budget, and stated:

"The University of the Health Sciences is to be closed, its current students to be placed elsewhere on scholarship programs, and its facilities put to other

(Continued on Page 6)

US Study Reports Decline in Miles-per-Gallon Performance

Foreign observers have lately been expressing dismay at the US's unabated consumption of world oil resources, as was the case when the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development assailed the US for failure to curb its appetite for petroleum (SGR Vol. VII, No. 3). However, statistics that recently came and went without eliciting general notice indicate that the American thirst for oil is considerably worse than has been generally realized.

According to a report issued March 4 by the Federal Highway Administration, the average fuel efficiency of vehicles in the US actually declined between 1966 and 1975 — from 12.47 to 12.20 miles per gallon. The only bright spot is that the 1975 performance represented a bit of an improvement over the miles-per-gallon figure for 1974, which was 12.09.

Furthermore, the number of miles driven per vehicle rose from 9530 in 1974 to 9644 in 1975, while gallons consumed per vehicle went up from 788 to 790. Total miles driven went up 4.5 per cent between 1975 and 1976, as compared with an average annual increase of 5.6 per cent for the five years prior to 1973.

Not noted in the report — but almost invariably noted by foreign visitors to the US — is that gasoline prices here are approximately one-third of those in Europe.

Frank Press on "New Arrangements for Science"

A guest editorial, "New Arrangements for Science in the Universities," attracted little notice when it was published July 18, 1975, in Science. *But it's now drawing second looks. The reason is that its author, Frank Press, chairman of MIT's Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences, has been appointed science adviser to President Carter. Following is the text:*

The structure of basic scientific research in the United States differs from that in other countries in that the universities have traditionally played the major role. The strength of science in the country is therefore directly related to the health of the universities. Currently both public and private universities are in difficult positions because of demographic changes affecting enrollment and increasing costs not matched by income. Seven out of ten science and engineering faculty members now hold tenure, and the proportion of young faculty members dropped from 39 percent in 1968 to 28 per cent in 1974. The rigidity imposed by the tenure system and the inability to bring in young people because of the reduced number of faculty openings may degrade the research performance of some of the most famous and productive departments in the country. Although a tie between research and education was justifiable in an earlier era, university research may require a new format, independent of the teaching function, in the coming years of declining student population. I believe that new institutional arrangements will be necessary if the universities are to maintain their scientific strength, and the following are some suggestions which might be considered.

A number of university science departments would be designated by government science support agencies as National Research Centers. They would be selected on the basis of past and current research performance, the commitment of the university to the field, and in some cases geographic distribution. Each research center might receive start-up funds, coherent area grants, with funding for 3- to 5-year periods from government agencies. Designation as a National Research Center would not imply continued, automatic funding, but the many projects in a center would be judged individually and competitively. The centers would be staffed primarily by recent Ph.D.'s, who would be supported full-time by government grants. The universities would undertake to grant rolling 3-year periods of tenure and offer space and other amenities to make the positions attractive. Faculty members in departments might become researchers at the centers for periods of 1 to 3 years, and vice versa. These centers would enable universities to bring young scientists into the university community, in close connection with established departments, and in this way insure the flow of the best young minds into the basic research structure of the universities.

There are many university scientists in the age range 55 to 65 who believe that their contributions to science are behind them and who would like to seek alternate ways to contribute during the last decade of their career. Government agencies should study the feasibility of undertaking to aid universities in finding alternate careers for these individuals. The university commitment might be something along the lines of purchasing annuities to cover the individuals for ages 55 through 65, at which time retirement would begin. The government contribution might be senior fellowships covering the remainder of the salary, which would enable the individuals to work in local government or foreign technical assistance programs, teach at small colleges that cannot afford science staffs, write textbooks, or staff professional or educational organizations. New faculty positions might be opened for young people in this manner.

(Continued on Page 7)

MEDICAL *(Continued from Page 5)*

uses. Physician needs of the military services can be satisfied more economically over the long run by direct recruitment."

Brown said the saving would amount to $14 million, a figure that takes into consideration scholarship costs for the students to continue their studies elsewhere.

What was not taken into consideration is that in the best of circumstances, medical school admission is a chancey business, and transfers after one year of study are extremely rare. Furthermore, nothing was said about the tenured faculty. Presumably, they will receive some compensation, but not even the Secretary of Defense can provide them with jobs.

According to a spokesman for the school, nearly $40 million has been spent so far on design and construction, and it may take another $20 million to wind up the project.

Brown's decision came at a time when the school was searching for a new president. Anthony R. Curreri, who saw it through the three-year startup period, returned last year to the University of Wisconsin, and was succeeded on an acting basis by former Deputy Secretary of Defense David Packard, who is also chairman of the Board of Regents.

Packard was lobbying hard last week on Capitol Hill for a reprieve, but since the school has no significant constituency or political guardians, the odds are that Brown will prevail and the first year of operation will be the last for the ill-conceived Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences. —DSG

PRESS *(Continued from Page 6)*

Several hundred young scientists would be selected on a competitive basis and be given salary support for several years. These positions would be used primarily to bring young scientists into a university department several years in advance of a retirement. Although grants would be made to individuals, only university departments that make the case that they will add an individual to the department in the next several years would be eligible to receive these "national scientists."

I am not oblivious to the fact that these proposals will cost money and this may not be the time to make such requests. However there is a growing national concern about the health of science. Perhaps the time has arrived for science support agencies and universities to initiate discussions with Congress and the Executive Branch about possible new institutional arrangements for research in the universities.

Transportation Course Directory

A 204-page directory of degree and non-degree university-level courses in transportation has been published by the Department of Transportation. Included is an index showing what's taught where in a variety of specialities, including rail, water transport, pipelines, and so forth. Copies are available for $2.80 each from the US Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402. The title is Directory of Transportation Education, and the stock number is 050-000-00121-1.

FDA Choice Widely Supported

Everyone who has spoken out on the subject — from Sidney Wolfe, head of Nader's Health Research Group, to the American Medical Association — seems happy about the appointment of Donald Kennedy to head the Food and Drug Administration.

Kennedy, professor of biology at Stanford University, has long been involved in Washington advisory duties, and at the time of his appointment was serving as a senior consultant to the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. He is the first non-MD to head the trouble-plagued FDA in 11 years, which Wolfe, a physician, sees as an asset, since "doctors are trained that pills are good."

FDA, as usual, is under a variety of Congressional guns and is in the midst of assorted outside and inside investigations. It is likely that the heat will be reduced until Kennedy has a chance to settle in, but given the rapacity of the pharmaceutical industry and the complexities of drug testing, it won't be long before he's presiding over his first crisis as FDA Commissioner.

ERDA Orders Crash Study Of Fast Breeder Reactor

The Energy Research and Development Administration (ERDA) has established a broad-based committee to conduct a crash review of the liquid metal fast breeder reactor (LMFBR) program, in preparation for President Carter's promised April 20 unveiling of his Administration's comprehensive energy policy.

When Carter revised the Ford budget requests last month, he stripped some $200 million from the budget for the LMFBR program, and announced that the timing and scope of the effort would be subjected to an intensive review (SGR Vol, VII, No. 4). Consequently, ERDA has established a steering committee under the chairmanship of Robert D. Thorne, Acting Administrator for Nuclear Energy, which includes some of the program's staunchest supporters and opponents. The committee will hold meetings on March 9 and 25 and April 5 and 6, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Washington, DC, and it is expected to turn in its report by mid-April.

The committee includes Carl Walske, President of the Atomic Industrial Forum; Chauncey Starr, President of the Electric Power Research Institute; Tom Cochran, of the Natural Resources Defense Council, and Frank von Hippel of Princeton University.

ERDA is also soliciting public comments on the LMFBR program for its review. Details of the program and of the steering committee meetings are available from the Acting Assistant Administrator for Nuclear Energy, ERDA, Washington, DC 20545.

Subscription Form

Science & Government Report
Northwest Sation
Box 6226A
Washington, D.C. 20015

☐ Renew my subscription ☐ Check enclosed

☐ Enter my subscription ☐ Please bill

Institutional subscribers: one year, $75 ☐ ; two years, $140 ☐

Individual subscribers: one year, $44 ☐ ; two years, $75 ☐

(Overseas airmail, $17.50 per year additional.)

Name _____

Address _____

_____ Zip _____

NSF Runs into Budget Opposition in the House

The relatively generous increases proposed for the National Science Foundation in Mr. Ford's valedictory budget (SGR Vol. VII, No. 2) have encountered an obstacle in Congress. The House subcommittee on Science, Research and Development, which is usually friendly toward NSF, has voted to pare some $30 million from the foundation's budget request for fiscal year 1978, a move which would still leave the Foundation with a 9.3 per cent increase, but which would cause problems in some NSF programs.

In particular, the subcommittee is seeking virtual elimination of the Kennedy-inspired "Science for Citizens" program, an effort aimed at improving public involvement in science-policy issues. The subcommittee has slashed the budget request for the program to $100,000 from its present level of $1.2 million, and has decreed that the funds should be used only to evaluate those projects begun in 1977.

Dispute over the Science for Citizens program delayed passage of an authorization bill for NSF last year by more than three months, and the subcommittee's move threatens to provoke a similar tussle this year. Kennedy, whose subcommittee has legislative authority over NSF, last year sought to increase support for the program to $3 million, but the House Committee on Science and Technology wanted to reduce it to $300,000. It took a House-Senate conference committee three months to agree on a compromise budget of $1.2 million.

House members were particularly concerned that the money should not be used to support public interest groups and intervenors in regulatory proceedings. The bill approved by the subcommittee this year includes a specific embargo on such uses of the funds.

As for other reductions in the NSF budget approved by the subcommittee, they would fall most heavily on the program of Research Applied to National Needs (RANN). The Ford budget had included a 15 per cent boost for RANN, with virtually all of the increase, amounting to $8.2 million, earmarked for earthquake research. The subcommittee has recommended, however, that the RANN budget be held approximately constant, but it has also stated that the proposed increases for earthquake research be allowed to go ahead. In other words, the rest of the RANN budget would have to be cut to accommodate the earthquake program.

In other areas of the NSF budget, the subcommittee has increased the request for science education programs, but has provided only cost-of-living increases for NSF's research support activities. The Ford budget had provided a large boost in research support specifically to counteract the erosion of support for basic research which occurred during the first half of the 1970s.

The subcommittee's bill was scheduled for markup by the full committee last week before going to the House. In the Senate, Kennedy's subcommittee hasn't yet completed action on its version of the authorization bill, but it is expected to propose some increases in the Foundation's overall budget. There's therefore a good chance that some of the subcommittee's actions will be overturned, but the message is clear that the NSF bill won't be rubber stamped by Congress this year.

Science & Government Report
Northwest Station
Box 6226A
Washington, D.C. 20015

Second class postage paid at Washington, D.C.

-00006 99/99
XEROX UNIV MICROFILMS
300 N ZEEB RD
ANN ARBOR MI 48106